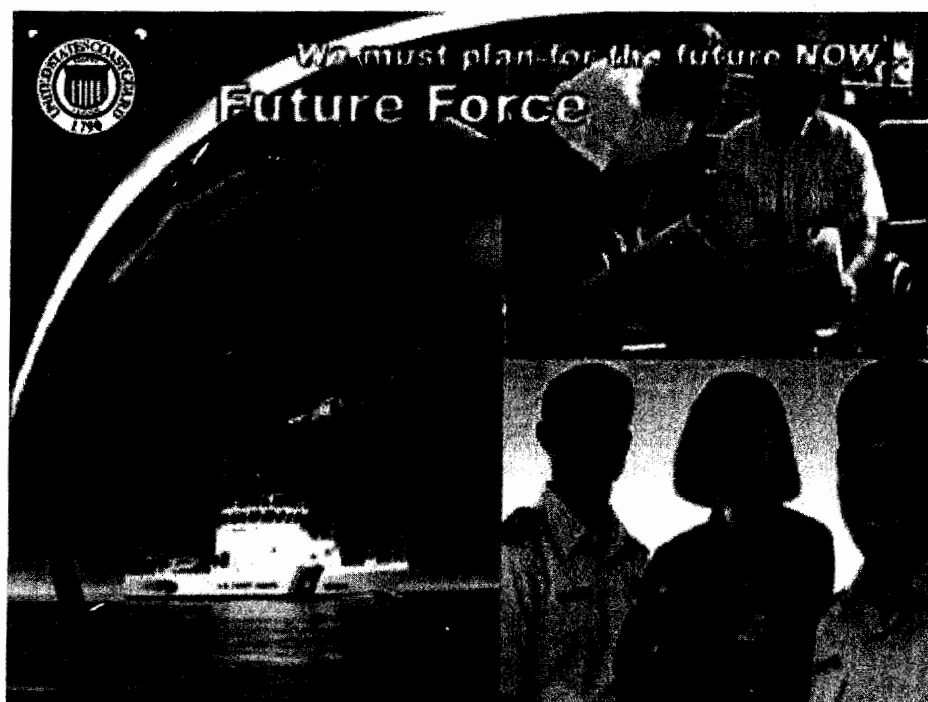


Future Force Officer Corps Management System Phase 2—Coast Guard Officer Specialties

**Part 2—An Evaluation of the Current State of Coast Guard
Officer Specialty Management**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report assesses the adequacy of officer specialties, evaluates the health of each specialty and provides point-in-time information on the number of officers who are specialists, broadened specialists and generalists. In doing so, the report provides a quantitative picture of the degree of strategic flexibility the Coast Guard has developed within the officer corps. It was undertaken as part of the ongoing evaluation of the current Coast Guard Officer Corps Management System (OCMS) and follows two previous reports: the Future Force 21 OCMS Phase 1 Report that documented, for the first time since the Kerrins study of 1962, the need to conduct an evaluation of OCMS flexibility and its ability to supply and retain an adequate number of specialists within the officer corps; and the Future Force 21 OCMS Phase 2 Report - Coast Guard Officer Specialties, Part 1 - A Review of Officer Specialty Management, that outlined the current processes used to establish and manage Coast Guard officer specialties. The OCMS includes the management of all processes involved with the accession, individual development, assignment, promotion, evaluation and separation of Coast Guard officers.

The following methodology was used to develop a comprehensive picture of the health of officer specialties and the current management of those specialties to meet Service needs. Interviews were conducted with Program Managers (PM), Program Force Managers (PFM), Coast Guard Headquarters Human Resources staff (G-W), and CGPC-opm staff and then followed up with written surveys that collected detailed specialty and specialty management data. Interviews were conducted with the CGPC-opm staff, and with individual officers at Coast Guard Headquarters and the Coast Guard Academy, as well as interviews with individual officers in various specialties. An analysis of the assignment histories of all officers in paygrades O-3 through O-6 on the ADPL as of 1 October 2002 was conducted and this resulted in a determination of the officer's specialty(ies). All data came from official Coast Guard sources and individual specialty data forms were validated by each specialty's PM or PFM.

Every effort was made to identify each officer within a specialty. However, in some cases, incomplete assignment and education data complicated or prevented accurate officer labeling. In these cases the subject matter experts used the available information and made a determination based on current CGPC-opm-2 policies and personal knowledge of the Service. We have a greater than 85% confidence level in the information developed from available data which is well beyond that obtainable directly from official Coast Guard data. Because of its direct linkage to specialty management, officer professional (career) "broadening" was also evaluated. Specialist, broadened specialist and generalist definitions were developed and applied to each officer where possible. The following working/notional definitions were produced:

Specialist: *An officer who acquires in-depth knowledge and skills in a specific area of expertise (specialty), either through education or Service experience, and who spends virtually all of his or her career between the grades of O-4 and O-6 assigned to billets within that specialty.*

Broadened Specialist: *An officer who acquires in-depth knowledge and skills in one specific area of expertise (specialty) and additional knowledge and skills in a second specialty, either through education or Service experience, and whose assignments between the grades of O-4 and O-6 are mixed among these specialties.*

Generalist: *An officer who acquires knowledge and skills in several areas of Coast Guard work, either through education or Service experience, and whose assignments between the grades of O-4 and O-6 are mixed among these many specialties.*

Overall, the current officer strength appears fairly healthy from an officer supply perspective. Our review of specialty populations, when compared with each specialty's billet structure indicates that the majority of programs' needs are being met, but some specialties and specialty families require closer monitoring and possible intervention. As demonstrated in the recently implemented Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB) plan for C4 specialists and Naval Engineers, skills or competency shortages may require unusual specialty management responses with fiscal consequences. Some shortages can be attributed to rapid

billet growth over a short period of time, which can distort a specialty's billet pyramid, resulting in mismatches between billet requirements and officer skills or rank. Additionally, attrition of junior officers within certain specialties may force implementation of, and dependency upon, retired recall programs to meet operational requirements. For a specialty management system already under stress, changes, especially billet growth, reduces system flexibility.

Finally, we examined forecasting tools currently used to help manage the officer workforce to help determine if the right tools are available to the Service to make personnel decisions that improve officer corps management while strengthening specialty health. We determined that the current database in Direct Access does not support the efforts of the Headquarters Workforce Planning Staff (G-WP-1) because it is not accurate and is incomplete. Extraordinary individual staff efforts overcome database system limitations and provide much-needed support to senior leadership in spite of, rather than as a result of, the current Direct Access system.

Findings and recommendations of this in-depth analysis are found at the end of this report. Most importantly they indicate that several specialties and specialty families are already under stress because of the limited availability of specialists: Intelligence, Training, Physician Assistants, Operations Ashore, Law Enforcement, Ice Operations and Naval Engineering specialties and Aviation, C4, Comptrollership, Management and Marine Safety families. Together this represents 73% of the current officers and officer billets that are experiencing some level of stress. It is imperative that the Service works to mitigate or manage these specialty limitations.

The Coast Guard's OCMS Project began as a result of:

- ◆ Concerns that the current OCMS may not provide sufficient skilled officers for mission accomplishment from among those armed forces officers found best qualified for promotion
- ◆ Concerns that a single pyramid, up-or-out promotion system designed over 40 years ago may not afford sufficient flexibility and agility in a changing political, social, and economic environment
- ◆ Changing mission requirements and corresponding changes in personnel requirements
- ◆ A surge in Homeland Security initiatives
- ◆ Changes anticipated under transforming recapitalization and system performance initiatives, and
- ◆ Mission growth that may require personnel increases to support emerging requirements (including new officer specialties) within the next few years.¹

The Coast Guard also stated that:

"Greater flexibility and increased efficiency and effectiveness in officer corps management are called for to ensure the Coast Guard recruits and retains the best qualified armed forces officers optimally distributed for superior mission accomplishment. System enhancements or changes, including processes, policies, management tools and regulatory changes may be necessary to achieve the Coast Guard's Future Force 21 goals".²

If "Greater flexibility and increased efficiency and effectiveness in officer corps management ..." are to occur, then the Coast Guard must have an integrated OCMS where all elements of the OCMS continuum, i.e., accessions, individual development, evaluations, promotions, assignments and separations, are linked. All workforce managers must understand that inside this integrated system "everything is connected to everything else" and that all workforce management decisions, (analyzed for both intended and unintended consequences), must be studied for their effect on other segments of the continuum prior to implementation. Our findings in this report support beginning the linking process with a productive feedback relationship between the assignments and promotion elements. Nevertheless, this should be a true

¹ Performance Work Statement For Future Force 21 (FF21)/ Officer Corps Management Systems (OCMS) Analysis, Planning and Implementation, November 22, 2002.

² Ibid.

beginning (and not an ending as well) of a continuous process of evaluation and considered evolutionary renewal so that the OCMS is always up to date with respect to the political, social, and economic changes of the nation.

Our evaluation of the current OCMS indicates that experienced workforce managers are working hard to ensure that the current "system" of independent processes is effective. They are hobbled in their efforts, however, by a system:

- ♦ with no effective common database of officer specialty, education and reliable assignment information
- ♦ with no standardized method of labeling competencies or skills
- ♦ with only unofficial officer career development guidelines where career guidance is either implicit or offered by senior officers based on anecdotal information or their own experiences
- ♦ with little connection between officer separations and accessions because of a lack of accurate officer specialty data
- ♦ with a seemingly inequitable training allowance billet quota assignment process
- ♦ with an immediate need to ensure integration between proposed future Deepwater officer personnel policies and the legacy OCMS
- ♦ with some specialties already displaying stress due to a lack of specialists
- ♦ with inconsistent management of officer professional (career) broadening among specialties due to a lack of guidelines and processes.

The good news is that workforce management staffs and basic processes are in place to lead the way to an improved OCMS, no matter what future alternative systems or enhancements are proposed. More good news is found in a vibrant assignment and evaluation system where assignment officers have stepped up to fill voids in the OCMS. However, these strengths are not positioned to handle the many concerns mentioned above without some redesigning of the current OCMS.

The Kerrins legislation of the early 1960s worked. It took the Service from a time where officers were generalists to the present; where officers are now a mix of specialists and broadened specialists. Our analysis shows that 58% of all captains are specialists, with most in the Aviation and Marine Safety specialty families. The remaining specialty families provide the system flexibility, supplying broadened specialists that keep the officer corps from becoming "stovepiped." Any future movement toward more specialization must consider the impact on this flexibility.

What is called for today is an improved system where the Coast Guard understands the requirements of its officer workforce in meeting Service, unit and individual officer needs. Improved specialty management with continual monitoring of each specialty's health, coupled with the ability to match an increasingly specialized workforce still requiring broadened specialists in senior leadership billets will produce "...a strong Service-centric focus instead of the current specialty-centric focus will produce officers competitive for senior leadership from all specialties; and, consequently, will meet the needs of the individual officers and the Service more fully."³

Accurately identifying and confirming Service demand and matching supply, within a complicated specialist/broadened specialist OCMS, where the Service is continually aware of the "balance point" within the OCMS is key to a flexible, adaptable, effective and efficient OCMS future.

³ FF21: Officer Corps Management System, Phase 2 – Coast Guard Officer Specialties, Part 2: White Paper: Officer Career Broadening: Make It Happen or Let It Happen?, Soza and Co., LTD, February 2003.

Next Steps

This task completes the evaluation of the current state of officer specialty management and the health of each specialty and all specialty families within the existing OCMS. Results from this and our previous reports will be used in the following tasks:

- ♦ Task 3—Evaluate Alternatives and Recommend Changes
- ♦ Task 4—Develop Implementation Plan and then Implement The Preferred Alternative.